



G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center

*to care for him who shall have borne the battle and his widow, and orphan*

# FOCUSED ON YOU

SEPTEMBER 2019

September is  
Suicide Prevention  
Month

#SPM19

**#BeThere**  
for service members and Veterans.

Veterans  
Crisis Line  
  
1-800-273-8255  
PRESS 1

VA and our partners work year-round to prevent Veterans suicide. Every September, Suicide Prevention Month gives individuals and communities across the country an opportunity to reflect on the ways we can all prevent suicide, including among Veterans.

You don't need special training to help prevent suicide, and even simple actions of support can make a real difference to a Veteran going through a difficult time. For instance, asking how a Veteran is doing—and listening—shows you care. Other thoughtful ways you can **Be There** include;

- Calling an old friend to say hello
- Sending a text to check in (for example, "Hey, we haven't talked in a while...how are you?")
- Reaching out and sharing resources when you read a social media post that may indicate thoughts of suicide
- Sharing stories of hope and positivity on your social media accounts
- Getting S.A.V.E. suicide prevention training online from PsychArmor Institute to learn how to talk to a Veteran who is having suicidal thoughts

Suicide is preventable, and each of these actions could help save a life. To end Veteran suicide, we all must work together. We all have a role to play, in Suicide Prevention Month and every month.

If you believe that a service member or Veteran in your life may be contemplating suicide, call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, text to 838255, or [chat online](#). Qualified and compassionate VA responders are on call 24/7/365 to connect service members and Veterans with support and keep them from harm.

# Signs of Crisis

## Learn to recognize red flags

People can experience an emotional or mental health crisis due to a wide range of situations. For some, it might be the end of a personal relationship. For others, it might be the loss of a job. For Veterans, these crises can be heightened by their experiences during military service.

When emotional issues reach a crisis point, Veterans and their loved ones should contact the Veterans Crisis Line.

**Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**

**Chat online**

**Text 838255**

Many Veterans may not show any signs of intent to harm themselves before doing so, but some actions can be a sign that a person needs help. Veterans in crisis may show behaviors that indicate a risk of self-harm.

### **The following can all be warning signs:**

- Appearing sad or depressed most of the time
- Hopelessness; feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling as if there is no reason to live
- Feeling excessive guilt, shame, or sense of failure
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Losing interest in hobbies, work, or school
- Increasing alcohol or drug misuse
- Neglecting personal welfare; a deteriorating physical appearance
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Showing violent behavior, like punching a hole in the wall or getting into fights
- Giving away prized possessions
- Getting affairs in order, tying up loose ends, or writing a will

### **The following signs require immediate attention:**

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- Looking for ways to kill yourself
- Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse, weapons, etc.

**<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/education/signs-of-crisis>**



# PREPARED, NOT SCARED



National Preparedness Month 2019

## Be prepared. Make an emergency plan today & practice it.

Make a plan today. Your family may not be together if a disaster strikes, so it is important to know which [types of disasters](#) could affect your area. Know how you'll contact one another and reconnect if separated. Establish a family meeting place that's familiar and easy to find.

Consider the specific needs in your household. As you prepare your plan, tailor your plans and supplies to your specific daily living needs and responsibilities. Discuss your needs and responsibilities and how people in the network can assist each other with communication, care of children, business, pets, or specific needs like the operation of durable medical equipment. Create your own personal network for specific areas where you need assistance. [www.ready.gov/plan](http://www.ready.gov/plan)

## Online Program Path to Better Sleep Helps Veterans Treat Insomnia

Almost half of the Veterans currently enrolled in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care have insomnia. Insomnia affects every aspect of wellness, and symptoms can be so tough that people may be ready to try anything to fall asleep. Finding a treatment that works can be hard because sleep disorders can be difficult to diagnose. VA created Path to Better Sleep to help Veterans improved their sleep from the convenience of their own home.

### What is Path to Better Sleep?

Path to Better Sleep was created specifically for service members and Veterans. It's completely free and anonymous. The online tools use leading sleep therapy CBT-i (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia) to help retrain the brain to get a full night's rest. CBT-i is proven to be more effective than medication.

### Why Path to Better Sleep?

Path to Better Sleep helps to change sleep patterns and reduce unhelpful thoughts and behaviors. It also features a [Sleep Check-up Tool](#) that can help sort through symptoms and access more information on healthy sleeping habits. Veterans can use the Sleep Diary to help track and review their sleep patterns, information that can be useful for providers when shared.

### What other features does Path to Better Sleep offer?

The self-directed program includes:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-i)
- A Sleep Check-up Tool to help Veterans understand their sleep problems
- A Sleep Diary to track sleep
- Videos and information on sleep disorders
- Downloadable fact sheets

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Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are infections you can get by having sex with someone who has an STI. STIs are the same thing as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Many STIs do not have symptoms, and you can have an STI and pass it on without knowing it. Some STIs can cause organ damage and infertility. Having one STI may raise your risk for getting other STIs. Some examples of STIs are chlamydia, gonorrhea, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and human papillomavirus (HPV).

You can get STIs from any sexual activity, whether it involves the mouth, anus, vagina, or penis. Some STIs can pass from a pregnant woman to her baby before or during the baby's birth. Most STIs can be treated and cured. Some cannot be cured but can be managed by taking medicines. If you are treated for an STI, your sex partner(s) should also be treated to prevent you from being re-infected.


The spread of some STIs can be reduced by using latex condoms every time you have sex and by having only one sex partner. Lambskin condoms and birth control pills can help prevent pregnancy but they will not protect you from STIs. A vaccine is available for young women and men against HPV, the virus that causes cervical cancer. The best way to fully protect yourself from STIs is to not have sex.

### Want to Know More?

If you want to learn more about STIs or think you may have one, talk with your VA health care team. They can help if you have questions about testing or treatment.




Sexually Transmitted Infections can have a great effect on your lifestyle risk. Take the [HealthLiving Assessment](#) today and learn your health age.



**Can't Fall Asleep?  
Can't Stay Asleep?**

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) can help.

**Free and Available, 24/7**  **No Medication Required**

### *(Continued from Page 3)* Where can I access the Path the Better Sleep course?

Visit [Path to Better Sleep](#) to learn more. No registration is required. Access the free resources at any time and place that is convenient for you.

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